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Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, our hearts rise up to meet You as the day rises to meet the Sun. Humble our lawmakers in Your presence that they may delight in the power You provide. Help them to remember that before honor comes humility. Give them also the wisdom to know that their sufficiency comes from You.

Lord, teach them Your wisdom as You infuse them with the spirit of reverence for You. May they make the commitment to faithfully serve You and country with their whole hearts.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. YOUNG). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will pro-

ceed to executive session to resume consideration of the Branstad nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Terry Branstad, of Iowa, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the People's Republic of China.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 5:30 p.m. will be equally divided in the usual form.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Democratic leader is recognized.

RUSSIA INVESTIGATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, since last week's all-Senators briefing with Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein, some of my friends on the other side of the aisle have alleged that his appointment of a special counsel impedes the congressional investigation into Russian interference in our elections and whether the Trump campaign was involved. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The executive branch investigation under the special counsel looks at criminal wrongdoing. The congressional investigation takes a broader approach. The two can proceed on parallel tracks, as has happened many times in the past. If anything the congressional investigation is doing potentially interferes with the special counsel's activities, the two parties will discuss it. It is a process called deconfliction. They know how to do it. They have done it before. There is no reason whatsoever for the congressional investigation to slow down or stop.

Mr. Mueller's appointment as special counsel in no way diminishes the need for Congress to play an active role in helping to get to the bottom of all the recent events. Let me repeat. This is our solemn constitutional duty, the very bedrock of the separation of powers and coequal branches of government designed by our Founding Fa-

thers to preserve something we all cherish: American liberty and American democracy. Let me outline three things that should happen.

First, Intelligence Committee Chair BURR and Ranking Member WARNER should continue to pursue their committee's investigation into these matters with just as much vigor. That investigation has been proceeding in a bipartisan way, and it absolutely should continue as such. For example, my friends Senators BURR and WARNER have recently requested financial records of key Trump campaign officials from the Treasury Department. They should be given that information and continue to pursue whatever other avenues they view as helpful to the committee's investigation.

Second, Mr. Comey should testify in both the Judiciary and the Intelligence Committees to discuss the events surrounding his dismissal. The committees should be given access to memos he reportedly drafted following interactions with President Trump, and Congress should also be provided any transcripts or tapes the White House might have of Mr. Comey's conversations with President Trump.

Third, the Intelligence Committee must be provided the details of transcripts relating to President Trump's reported disclosure of information to the Russian Foreign Minister and Ambassador. There is a great deal of dispute about what was said at that meeting. The committee should have access to both Mr. Comey's notes and the White House's notes.

Finally, the Senate must demand the next FBI Director be nonpartisan, independent, fearless, and of unimpeachable integrity, just as Mr. Mueller is. A career politician of either party or anyone who suggests a lack of impartiality should not be considered a fit choice for that office. Every one of these, by the way, deals with congressional oversight—some directly, like the appointment of an FBI Director; some a little

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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more indirectly, such as figuring out what exactly was said in the room with the Russian Foreign Minister and Ambassador, but all of it is clearly within what the Constitution requires and the Founding Fathers wanted Congress to be. So the congressional committees have really an obligation to our democracy to continue their role.

HEALTHCARE

Mr. President, on another matter—healthcare. Today, the Trump administration delayed for another 90 days their decision on whether to defend the administration's position in a lawsuit filed by the House Republicans about the cost-sharing payments in the Affordable Care Act. It is a decision that greatly increases the uncertainty in our healthcare system.

The cost-sharing program keeps healthcare costs low for working Americans and helps insurers stay in the marketplace, giving Americans more choices. It keeps the average person's premiums down, keeps their deductibles low. It makes it a lot easier for many working Americans to afford healthcare. That was its purpose, and it is succeeding in its purpose, but by continuing to sow uncertainty about this program, both by refusing to defend the lawsuit and by making outright threats to end it, the Trump administration has already caused insurers to flee the marketplace or propose rate increases for the next year. Let me repeat. Right now, the Trump administration's actions are sowing great uncertainty that causes insurers to pull out of States and increase their costs, making it more likely that working Americans won't be able to afford coverage next year.

A spokesperson for America's Health Insurance Plans, AHIP, the industry's main trade group, said the following, and this is their quote, not mine:

We need swift action and long-term certainty on [the cost-sharing program]. It is the single most destabilizing factor in the individual market, and millions of Americans could soon feel the impact of fewer choices, higher costs and reduced access to care.

The insurance industry itself is saying that the No. 1 thing that could be done to keep costs down, to keep other insurers in the marketplace, is to make permanent cost sharing.

President Trump's attempt to blame what is happening on ObamaCare is totally contradicted by what the health insurance plans say when it comes to cost sharing. So refusing to guarantee the cost-sharing payments is sabotage, plain and simple, and the Trump administration knows it.

The administration made the last cost-sharing payment but refuses to say they will continue to make them permanently. They know they will get blamed for the chaos that would ensue should they end these payments. They are afraid to do that. But they also want to threaten the stability of the healthcare system in order to get Democrats to work with them on their healthcare bill. So what they tried to

do is have their cake and eat it too. They said: We are going to delay the lawsuit, but we are still going to have that uncertainty that hurts Americans out there. That is profoundly irresponsible.

Threatening to defund healthcare in order to win political leverage is hostage-taking at its very worst because it holds hostage millions of innocent Americans who very much need healthcare costs to be lower and affordable. It is already causing massive uncertainty. It will only get worse if the administration continues to kick the can down the road 3 months at a time.

There is one very simple solution: Instead of delaying the decision every 3 months, the White House ought to step up to the plate and say once and for all that they will make those payments permanently—payments which help millions of Americans pay less for their healthcare, payments which the insurance industry itself says would help stabilize markets and help people gain healthcare.

THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET

Next, Mr. President, on the budget, the President of the United States will release his budget for 2018 this week. It could come as early as tomorrow. All indications are that it will be similar to his skinny budget from earlier this year. I want to remind everyone here in the Senate what a disaster that budget would be if it were ever implemented by Congress.

The President told the American people he would help create jobs and provide greater economic security for families. This budget does exactly the opposite. It is not a jobs budget. It is not an economic security budget. It is a budget that takes a meat cleaver to the middle class by gutting programs that help them the most, including many that create jobs and power the economy. Transportation is cut. Education is cut. Programs that promote scientific and medical research are cut. Programs that protect clean air and clean water are cut. All of these programs are favored by the American people. They have been favored by a vast majority of my Republican friends across the aisle. But the President's budget is an outlier, way out there. It fits with Mr. Mulvaney's beliefs, but he was an outlier in the Congress when he called for the government to be shut down and when he wanted to have the government play so little a role in helping the middle class. That is harmful to America.

Here is another one that really is worrisome: Recent reports say that the President's budget will target Medicaid for significant cuts—as large or larger than the \$880 billion the House Republicans would cut in their TrumpCare bill. This would pull the rug out from so many Americans who need help—those suffering from opioid and heroin addiction, people in nursing homes and their families who care for them, the elderly, the disabled, and children.

Medicaid has become a middle-class program. Opioid addiction. What about

a 40- or 50-year-old couple who is trying to raise their kids, saving for college, and has a parent who needs to be in a nursing home. Right now, Medicaid pays for it. What are they going to do when that is cut? They have two choices: Shell a huge amount of money out of their own pockets, which they can't afford, or maybe bring mom or dad back home, where there may be no room for them. What a horrible choice. What a horrible choice. Well, that is what the President is proposing to do when he dramatically slashes Medicaid.

I will repeat. Medicaid helps the very poor, but it also helps the middle class, and the majority of its money now seems to go to the middle class. I believe something like 60 percent goes to nursing homes or some high percentage like that.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that a cut to Medicaid of this size would deprive roughly 10 million Americans of Medicaid benefits over the next decade. Medicaid has always benefited the poor, and that is a good thing, but I remind my colleagues that it has increasingly become a middle-class program. Here is where it goes: Medicaid provides benefits for 60 percent of Americans in nursing homes.

Listen to this, Mr. President and my colleagues: Medicaid helps 1.75 million veterans—1 in 10. It provides services for Americans struggling with opioid addiction, which is a problem that affects so many.

If the reporting is accurate, these cuts to Medicaid that are in the President's budget carry a staggering human cost. Once again, Donald Trump is breaking his promise to the working people of America.

We have seen promise after promise broken as if they did not even matter. What he said in the campaign and what he governs as has almost no overlap in so many areas. Here is what Candidate Trump said when he campaigned: "I'm not going to cut Social Security like every other Republican and I'm not going to cut Medicare or Medicaid." He promised he would help take care of those suffering from opioid addiction. If he cuts Medicaid, he is breaking that promise—boom—right in half.

Candidate Trump campaigned as a populist and said he wanted to help the working people, but since he has taken office, he has governed like a hard-right conservative, pushing policies that help the uber-wealthy at the expense of the middle class. TrumpCare and the budget the President will be proposing tomorrow says one thing and does another.

Many of my Republican friends come from States that have significantly expanded their Medicaid Programs over the past few years, insuring hundreds of thousands, sometimes millions of their constituents.

Based on what we know about this budget, the good news—the only good news—is that it is likely to be roundly rejected by Members of both parties

here in the Senate, just as the last budget was. Democrats and Republicans, on the 2017 budget, virtually ignored the President and his proposal. We got together, and we compromised. Not everyone got everything they wanted, but we produced a budget that America can be proud of and one that helps the middle class.

We have shown Democrats and Republicans, the House and Senate, can come together to compromise on appropriations in 2017. We should follow that same blueprint in 2018. We should ignore the President's budget which would devastate the middle class and instead work across the aisle to advance reasonable compromise legislation later this year.

I yield the floor to my good friend from Texas.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I came to the floor during the last part of the remarks of the distinguished Democratic leader, and it just reminded me of a headline I saw in this morning's newspaper that just, to me, exemplifies how dishonest, sometimes, the way questions are framed here when it comes to dealing with our financial responsibilities. The headline in the Washington Post talked about President Trump's proposal slashing Medicaid, like the Democrats have criticized the House healthcare replacement bill slashing Medicaid even though, as a factual matter, Medicaid would continue to grow year after year after year.

As the distinguished Presiding Officer and I have previously discussed, one question is, What is a responsible rate of Consumer Price Index or inflation to deal with medical inflation so that when we return Medicaid to the States, spending at let's say 2016 levels, what is a responsible rate of continued growth to deal with medical inflation so that the States are not left with an unsustainable burden?

But the idea that spending at current levels, plus an additional cost-of-living index year after year after year, means that Medicaid spending won't go up every year—next year it will be more than this year. The following year it will be more than next year. So only in the fevered imagination of, apparently, the headline writers at the Washington Post and in some of our Democratic friends could that be considered a cut. In the rest of the country, they would consider that as Medicaid growing, not being cut.

It is true that one of the things the House did that I think is an important reform of one of our principle entitlement provisions was to put some sort of sustainable cap on the growth of spending on entitlements, which perviously had been uncapped.

Some day there is going to be a day of reckoning in this country when it comes to spending. We have \$20 trillion in debt. We know now that the Federal Reserve is loosening its hold on inter-

est rates, that those are creeping up, and one of the estimates is that if interest rates due to improved economic performance were to reach historic norms, we would soon be paying more for interest on the national debt than we would be paying for defense spending. That is simply unsustainable, not to mention the fact that we would then be essentially appropriating 30 percent of what the Federal Government spends and leaving 70 percent untouched.

We can't get the country on a sustainable financial path just dealing with 30 percent of what the Federal Government spends, and we need to have a serious conversation, not a misleading characterization of the problem. We need a serious conversation about the reality facing our country and future generations because right now we are spending their inheritance, so to speak. In other words, I consider it an act of immorality for me to be spending money and forcing my children and future generations to pay it back. That is just not fair to them, and we need to come to grips with that sooner rather than later.

NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Mr. President, on another note, last week, the administration sent official notice to Congress of its intent to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA. It was a big part of President Trump's campaign platform that the United States needed smarter, fairer trade deals that benefit more Americans. I certainly agree with that principle.

I do think, in some quarters, NAFTA has been unfairly maligned. But it is true that it is 23 years old, and it needs to be modernized. I think all of us can rally around that, consistent with the principle in President Trump's campaign that America needs smarter, fairer trade deals that benefit more Americans.

Free trade has, after all, been a boon to the American economy—and certainly the Texas economy because we are the No. 1 exporting State in the Nation. Our farmers, ranchers, and small business owners have benefited from trade agreements, particularly NAFTA, that help them send more of the products they raise, grow, and build to more markets around the world, principally to Canada and Mexico; but certainly, other trade agreements allow those manufactured goods, stock raised, and produce grown to go to markets around the world.

We comprise in America about 5 percent of the potential markets in the world, so 95 percent is the rest of the world and a market to buy the things we make and grow and raise here. Why not help create more jobs and a stronger economy here at home by encouraging that kind of free and fair trade?

There has been significant growth in exports since NAFTA was agreed to 23 years ago. Of course, Mexico continues to be an important economic partner, helping my State, Texas, grow and spe-

cifically creating a vibrant ecosystem along the border, but the rest of the country benefits too.

The national Chamber of Commerce estimates that there are 5 million American jobs as a result of binational trade with Mexico. With Canada, it is about 8 million. Why in the world would we want to do anything to jeopardize that? I suggest we don't.

Free trade doesn't just mean more opportunities for our agricultural sector or business owners, but it also helps American families buy more affordable products here at home, too, and that is why we need to make sure that any changes to NAFTA are improvements to the overall agreement.

I was encouraged just this last week when Ambassador Lighthizer, the U.S. Trade Representative, and Secretary of Commerce Ross met with members of the Senate Finance Committee. Essentially, what they said is that their first principle, when it comes to renegotiating NAFTA, is to do no harm. That is a pretty good rule of thumb. In fact, it reminds me of the Hippocratic Oath that doctors take when treating patients: First, do no harm. Well, I believe that is a good place to start.

Over the last two decades under this agreement, the economy in my State of Texas—which has been the engine that has been pulling the national economy in many respects—has grown significantly because of the tremendous access afforded by trade. We have to be careful not to do any harm to that and to look for ways to improve it.

There is no denying that this agreement is an old one created well before the digital and global economy of today. It was written before the energy renaissance in North America occurred, whereby instead of peak energy production—which is what we thought we had reached—we now have so much natural gas and oil that we export it to the world. That is great for jobs here at home. It is great to be able to do that for our allies around the world who need a dependable, alternative supply of energy in many respects, rather than being the victims of energy being used as a weapon against them. So the energy renaissance is another good reason that updating NAFTA makes sense.

I look forward to working with the President and his team to take great care that any efforts to modernize NAFTA don't sacrifice the benefits we have enjoyed for the last two decades. Hopefully, we can modernize it in a way that will allow more Americans to take advantage of it, and our economy will continue to grow and prosper as a result.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. President, on another matter, as we all know, this Chamber continues to consider the best way forward to repeal and replace ObamaCare. The entire Republican Conference, all 52 of us, have been meeting regularly in small groups and larger groups so we can finally put ObamaCare behind us. I have to say it is a shame that none of our Democratic

colleagues appear willing to lift a finger to help us do that, even though they know that ObamaCare is in meltdown mode.

We have promised multiple times, at least in the last three elections, to do away with this disaster of a healthcare law so that American families can get the healthcare they need at a price they can afford. This isn't just a talking point. This is our goal. This is our objective.

When I said that ObamaCare has been a failure, I am reminded of a letter written to me by one of my constituents from the Dallas-Fort Worth area. This gentleman is a small business owner. Since the implementation of ObamaCare, he has had to change his insurance each year, and every time, his rates have increased. He estimates they had gone up from roughly \$350 a month now to \$800 a month, not to mention his out-of-pocket costs. They have skyrocketed from \$3,500 to \$14,000. That is not affordable healthcare. At that price, I can't imagine it does him much good at all, particularly when you couple those high premiums with higher deductibles, in many instances \$6,000 or more for the deductible alone. So even though you are paying premiums for insurance and those premiums are going up every year, you still have such a high deductible that it effectively makes you self-insured, and you don't benefit from the insurance you actually have.

The first time this gentleman was forced to change his healthcare plan was because his insurance carrier completely pulled out of the marketplace, and that is something we are hearing across the country. It is not just a Texas phenomenon. I imagine there are similar stories in States like Indiana, North Dakota, Wisconsin, Missouri, Michigan, and Montana, just to mention a few. It is simply proof that the ObamaCare experiment is a failure, and the government-mandated, one-size-fits-all approach to healthcare doesn't work very well.

The next year, this same gentleman went with a different insurance company, but they canceled the plan he was already on. Then that insurance company pulled all individual healthcare plans from the State, so he had to find another health insurance plan.

That is not where the bad news ends. The doctor he has had for 20 years didn't accept the new health insurance plan, so instead of finding a new doctor, which he didn't want to do, he is now paying out of pocket so that he can keep the doctor he wants.

Remember what President Obama said countless times: If you like your plan, you can keep it. If you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor. He said that a family of four would find, on average, a savings of \$2,500 a year in their health insurance premiums. None of that has proved to be true. This is an experiment that has ended in failure. It didn't turn out to be the case for this

constituent of mine; each time his plan changed, he saw a price increase and a coverage decrease.

Even if Hillary Clinton had been elected President of the United States, we would still need to revisit the failures of ObamaCare because the situation is simply not sustainable for roughly about 11 million people—about 6 percent of the people who get their insurance in the individual market.

In spite of knowing that many of their constituents are being hurt by the failures of ObamaCare, our Democratic colleagues—even though they know it—refuse to do anything about it. Again, we invite them to work with us, not for our benefit but for the benefit of the people they represent.

This is not making life any easier for my constituents in Texas, and I am confident that is the case for people across the country. That is why our efforts to replace ObamaCare are so important, and that is why we will keep fighting to get it done because families across the country need access to quality healthcare they can afford that is not chosen for them but is what they choose because it suits their needs.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that all quorum calls until 5:30 p.m. today be equally divided.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CORNYN. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, last week, we confirmed two well-qualified nominees, Jeffrey Rosen as Deputy Secretary of Transportation and Rachel Brand as Associate Attorney General, and today we will have an opportunity to confirm another excellent nominee, Gov. Terry Branstad to be U.S. Ambassador to China.

While I am pleased the Senate is working to fill these important positions, it has been disappointing to see so much pointless obstruction by our friends across the aisle. They have continuously forced procedural hurdles on nominees for no other reason than to stall confirmations, launching more filibusters against this President's Cabinet than any other in history. They have done so not to change the result but simply to eat up floor time that could be used for legislation to help our constituents.

Take the floor vote they forced last week on the Branstad nomination. The Senate voted overwhelmingly, 86 to 12, on that motion, proving once again that our Democratic colleagues' tactics have little to do with the nominees themselves but are just delaying for

delay's sake. It is really past time to stop the games.

Once confirmed as Ambassador to China, Governor Branstad will be tasked with a portfolio that is important not only for our diplomatic relationship with China but also for our trade policies with that country. He has earned the support of Senators on both sides of the aisle and was reported out of the Foreign Relations Committee by a voice vote.

Having served as the Governor of Iowa for more than two decades, Branstad has developed a strong understanding of agriculture, trade, and other key national interests. His experience on these issues will guide him as he works to strengthen our relationship with China and pursue trade policies that can benefit American workers and businesses. I look forward to confirming him as our Nation's next Ambassador to China so he can get started on the important tasks before him.

NOMINATION OF JOHN SULLIVAN

Mr. President, after we confirm Governor Branstad, we will vote to advance another well-qualified nominee to serve as our Nation's Deputy Secretary of State, John J. Sullivan. It is both a critical and challenging role, but Mr. Sullivan's extensive background has prepared him for the task ahead. Through the years, he has worked at the Defense Department and the Justice Department. He also served as the Deputy Secretary of Commerce. I am confident that his experience will serve him well as he works as a key adviser to Secretary Tillerson and helps lead our Nation in addressing the range of security issues we face. We look forward to confirming him soon.

Having these key officials in place at the State Department is of great importance as we work with the administration on shaping our foreign policy and strengthening our posture in the international community.

THE PRESIDENT'S INTERNATIONAL TRIP

As we know, the President is currently traveling on his first international trip as our Commander in Chief. The trip provides the President with an important opportunity to engage with key allies, discuss our shared interests, and continue conversations on issues where we can work together in the future. So we wish the President and the First Lady both a successful trip and safe travels as they return to the United States later this week.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that all quorum calls until 5:30 p.m. today be equally divided.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Arkansas.

NATIONAL DRUG COURT MONTH

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I rise to recognize National Drug Court Month and show my support for the positive impact drug courts have on cutting crime, saving money, and restoring lives.

I have seen firsthand the impact of drug courts in Arkansas. This proven

approach has helped many Arkansans suffering from drug and alcohol abuse who have received the treatment and services they need to turn their lives around. For more than two decades, these courts have offered Arkansas' drug-addicted, nonviolent offenders an alternative to jail while rehabilitating them through a strenuous treatment program.

We have nearly 90 specialty courts in Arkansas that are providing lifesaving treatment to more than 3,000 individuals with substance use disorders, and the results are impressive. Our State saves \$45 million each year by diverting these offenders from prison to drug courts. Ninety percent of Arkansas drug court participants' drug tests come back negative for illegal substances, compared to 64 percent of those on probation and parole.

Drug courts are a critical component of today's criminal justice system. They have proven to be an effective alternative to jail for individuals convicted of nonviolent drug charges. Holding offenders with substance use and mental health disorders accountable through strict supervision and treatment, drug courts and veterans treatment courts have saved taxpayer dollars and the lives of more than 1.5 million people, including a remarkable man I recently met who shared his story.

Blayne was facing 20 years in prison because of crimes he had committed to support a 10-year addiction to prescription opioids. This epidemic currently takes 94 American lives every single day, but Blayne is one of the lucky ones. His community had a drug court. The drug court program gave him the tools he needed to stop using drugs and helped him reconnect with his family, find employment, and get his life back on track.

Instead of sitting in a jail cell on the taxpayers' dime, he is working as a teacher. Instead of breaking into homes, he owns one. Today, Blayne is a dedicated family man. He told me: "Drug court was a chance to become the father and husband that I wanted to be."

His story is similar to hundreds of Arkansans who have drug courts to thank for turning their lives around. An Arkansas drug court gave a woman named Sammy a second chance. She became addicted to painkillers at the age of 22 when she suffered a back injury. Her addiction led her down a very dangerous path, where she also started using meth every day. It also led her into the criminal justice system, and she was facing 20 years in prison. Drug court helped Sammy change her lifestyle. Now she is a positive role model for her children, holding down a full-time job and giving back to her community.

This is the power drug courts and other treatment courts have that change lives, heal families, and save money. The success of drug treatment courts has become a model tailored to

the needs of different groups from veterans to juveniles. The willingness of the judicial system to adopt alternative methods to jail time is a cost-effective approach to changing the habits of drug addicts and saving the lives of people like Blayne and Sammy.

As Washington pursues options for criminal justice reform, drug courts are a great example of a program that works. More than 25 years of research has proven they reduce crime and substance abuse, break the vicious cycle of recidivism, and keep families together.

In Arkansas and every other State in the country, drug courts are making a real difference. I want to recognize and thank the more than 30,000 drug court judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, treatment providers, probation officers, court administrators, and other professionals who are on the frontlines of providing a path to recovery. As we recognize National Drug Court Month, this is a great opportunity to show our commitment for the Drug Court Discretionary Grant Program and the Veterans Treatment Court Initiative at the Department of Justice. While there are 150,000 Americans being served by drug courts and veterans treatment courts today, there are more than 1 million individuals in our justice system who do not yet have access to these lifesaving programs.

I ask you to join me in supporting resources for these programs to improve public safety, save taxpayer dollars, and, most importantly, save lives.

With that, I yield back.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, the United States' relationship with China is one of our most complicated and consequential in the world. The United States must maintain a constructive partnership with China to address global threats ranging from climate change to North Korea's nuclear program. While our interests are often at odds, our relationship with China must be built on respect, not rebuffs—on tact, not tweets.

On the campaign trail, President Trump's rhetoric about China was as caustic as it was hollow. He claimed that climate change was a "hoax perpetrated by the Chinese." He contended that we could not "continue to allow China to rape our country." He declared China was "our enemy" and that he would direct the Treasury Department to label China a currency manipulator on his first day in office. He said he would not honor the "one China policy" without extracting concessions from the Chinese on trade. None of these threats materialized when Trump assumed office, of course. When rhetoric met reality, Trump retreated.

Even while he railed against China during his campaign, Trump simultaneously extolled his deep financial ties with the country. He credited the Chinese for much of his own personal fortune, saying, "I've made a lot of money with China," and "I do great with China, I sell them condos, I have the

largest bank in the world from China, the largest in the world by far. They're a tenant of mine in a building I own in Manhattan."

Trump is the only President in modern history who has not divested his financial holdings or established a blind trust, and his financial entanglements with China have grown since his inauguration. Earlier this year, China gave the Trump Organization preliminary approval for 38 trademarks, paving the way for the President and his family to develop a host of branded business from hotels, to insurance, to bodyguard and escort services. On the very same night that Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner dined with Chinese President Xi at Mar-a-Lago, China granted Ivanka Trump's company three new trademarks. All of this points to the very real possibility that Trump and his family are using the Presidency to increase their personal profit, in violation of the Constitution, and that the Chinese are accommodating them.

Governor Terry Branstad is far from an ideal choice for the U.S. Ambassador to China. His record on labor rights is deeply troubling, including his decision earlier this year to sign into law a bill that dramatically scales back the rights of workers to bargain collectively for their health insurance, evaluation procedures, and supplemental pay.

However, in an administration that has put forward few qualified candidates for public office, Governor Branstad possesses some of the experience required for this critical diplomatic post. Governor Branstad has worked with the Chinese and with Chinese President Xi specifically for several decades. In his testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he alleged he would use this longstanding relationship to press President Xi on the North Korean nuclear threat. He acknowledged the importance of opening Chinese markets to U.S. goods while recognizing the need to hold them accountable for unfair trade practices. He claimed that he would promote American values abroad, including human rights, the importance of a free press, and a rules-based international order.

Governor Branstad's recognition of the importance of these basic American values, values President Trump himself does not acknowledge, is vital in our engagements with China and countries around the world. Governor Branstad's longstanding relationships in China suggest he may be more responsible and disciplined in his statements and behavior than President Trump. Given the vast array of global issues that require China's cooperation, I hope Governor Branstad remains faithful to his testimony and attempts to foster a productive relationship with China. For these reasons, I support his nomination for U.S. Ambassador to China.

Mr. YOUNG. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

STOP ACT

Mr. PORTMAN. Madam President, I came to the floor last week to talk about our police officers. It was during Police Week. We talked about the bravery and heroism of our officers back home. I talked about tragic stories of police officers who were gunned down in the line of duty and talked about what they do for us every day.

Today I want to talk about an issue that is endangering their lives and the lives of so many in our communities but specifically law enforcement. This happens in every single State represented in this Chamber. This danger is this new epidemic of synthetic heroin, of opioids.

We know more about heroin and prescription drugs. Now we have these synthetic heroins coming in that are even more powerful. Being a police officer has always been a tough job, but it is becoming riskier today because of this. Some people have heard it as carfentanil or fentanyl or U4. Most of this synthetic poison coming into our communities is coming through the mail system. It is coming from overseas, primarily from China, where they have laboratories, where some evil scientist is mixing up this chemical mix and sending it over here into our communities.

Let me tell you about something that happened last Friday in East Liverpool, OH. Some of you may know the name "East Liverpool" because it is the same city where there was a photograph that went viral on the Internet of a couple who had overdosed in the front of a car, with their 3-year-old grandson in a car seat behind them. It showed the grandson, and it showed the two who had overdosed passed out in the front of the car.

In this same town of East Liverpool, OH, an officer by the name of Chris Green pulled over a car in a routine traffic stop. As he came up to the car, he noticed there was white powder sprinkled around the car. He took the appropriate precautions. He put on his gloves, he put on a mask, and he began to deal with the situation at hand. The people in the car apparently had spread the powder to try to avoid it being detected, but it was easily detectable.

At the end of his arrest process, there was a small amount of powder that was left on his jacket, which he did not notice. He went back to the police station. When he got there, he noticed the powder on his shirt and instinctively he went like this to get the powder off of his shirt. This small amount of powder touching his hand caused him to overdose. Officer Green is not a small guy; he is about 6 feet 3 inches, 225

pounds. He is a big, strong police officer who overdosed just by trying to get a few flakes of powder off of his jacket. Why? Because this fentanyl is so powerful. It is so deadly.

Fortunately, his fellow police officers were able to save his life with naloxone. This is a miracle drug which reverses the effects of an overdose and which is being used on our streets every single day to save people from dying from overdoses. In this case, it was used to keep a police officer who was doing his duty and who had simply tried to get a few flakes of powder off of his uniform from dying of an overdose.

East Liverpool police chief John Lane put it this way:

If he had been alone, he'd be dead. That's how dangerous this stuff is.

Chief Lane later made the point that if Officer Green had gone home in that shirt and unknowingly had this powder on his shirt or his jacket, he could have endangered the lives of his family. That is a scary thought. Obviously, that is true. That is how deadly these drugs are.

It only takes a few milligrams, just a few specks, to kill you. This chart will show you how much it takes. Here you see that 10 milligrams of carfentanil is powerful enough to sedate a 15,000-pound elephant. Here is the carfentanil over here, as shown on this chart. You will see why a fatal dose can be a very, very small amount—30 milligrams for heroin, 3 milligrams for fentanyl, even less than 3 milligrams for carfentanil.

By the way, for those of you at home, if you look at a penny, you will see Abraham Lincoln's profile on one side of it. The deadly dose of fentanyl that we are talking about here is enough to only cover up the face of Abraham Lincoln on a penny. That is how little we are talking about and how deadly this stuff is. You can see why our law enforcement officers are so concerned about this.

Officer Green is not the only one to experience this. There was a famous case last year where two officers in Atlantic County, NJ—Detective Dan Kallen and Detective Eric Price—overdosed on fentanyl just by breathing fentanyl in the air at a crime scene. As some of you have heard, fentanyl is so dangerous that they are afraid to use dogs to try to sniff it out because just by trying to sniff these packages to see whether fentanyl is included in them, the dogs could overdose and die. Fentanyl is dangerous stuff.

By the way, it is taking up more and more of the resources of our police officers and other first responders. Earlier this year, I came to the floor and talked about Officer Ben Rhodes of Chillicothe, OH. Last year Officer Rhodes reversed more than 50 drug overdoses. This is one officer in one small town.

Talk to the firefighters in your community and ask them whether they go on more fire runs or more heroin and

fentanyl and carfentanil overdose runs. I almost guarantee you they will say they go on more overdose runs. As a result, in some communities, those firefighters are not there to be able to protect us as you would typically think from the fires that still continue to be a major problem. So this is a real issue. It is taking up more and more of their time and more resources and causing more and more crime.

On Thursday, in Middletown, OH, which is a town in Southern Ohio, a family was getting ready to leave the house. In fact, they had already strapped their 3-month-old baby into a car seat. It is not clear whether they had shot up with heroin before they put the baby in the car seat or after, but they went back into the house and they overdosed in the house. They had the baby in the car seat in the car. They overdosed in the home.

They have another son who is 5 years old. He ran out of the house barefoot. He went to a neighbor's house, to his stepfather's home, which is a few blocks away, and yelled at the door: Mom and dad are dead. Mom and dad are dead.

The grandfather called the police, and they rushed to the scene. They were able to revive the boy's dad with naloxone. They used seven doses of naloxone on the mother, but she still couldn't wake up. From talking to police officers about this, they tell me that there is a very good sign this involved fentanyl, perhaps carfentanil, because after two, three, four, five, six, seven doses of naloxone, she still could not be revived. Fortunately, the police rushed her to the hospital, where they were finally able to bring her back.

Again, this is what police officers are facing every day in my home State of Ohio, in your State, in your community.

After this incident, the Middletown Police said on Facebook:

It has to stop. Please get help before it's too late. Not only to save yourself, but to save your kids. Give these kids a chance by getting help. If you or someone you love has a drug problem, please seek help right now.

This is a cry from our police officers saying that this can't continue.

Talk to the firefighters and police officers who have administered naloxone to the same individual time and time again, overdose after overdose. These brave officers and police officers around the country are feeling overwhelmed.

Drug overdoses are now the No. 1 cause of accidental death in the United States of America. It has now surpassed car accidents. It has way surpassed gun violence. In the last 3 years, more Americans have died of drug overdoses than died in the Vietnam war. More Americans are dying of drug overdoses now than died of AIDS at the peak of the AIDS epidemic in 1995. This year, 2017, more people will die from overdoses from opioids than died from AIDS at the peak in 1995—another tragedy. According to an article in the New

York Times, more than four times as many people are dying every day from this epidemic than were dying of drug overdoses at the peak of the crack cocaine epidemic. When I say it is the worst drug crisis we have faced in this country and that it is an epidemic, that is not overstating it.

The Fraternal Order of Police and the Major County Sheriffs of America are actually focused on this issue, and they want better tools to be able to at least try to stop some of this poison—the fentanyl and the carfentanil—from coming into our communities.

I mentioned earlier the fact that this actually comes by the mail system. Unbelievable. It doesn't come by all mail systems. It comes through the U.S. mail system, as opposed to the private carriers, such as FedEx, UPS, DHL, or others. One reason is because our mail system in the United States does not require the kind of advanced notice of where the package is from, what is in it, and where it is going that the private carriers require. So where do the traffickers go? They go to our mail service, the U.S. Postal Service, and the postal service in the country that interacts with and connects with our postal service.

This is why the Fraternal Order of Police, the Major County Sheriffs of America, and other law enforcement are saying: Help us by passing legislation called the STOP Act. The STOP Act is to help stop traffickers from bringing these deadly poisons into our communities, the kind of stuff that caused Officer Green to overdose.

Fentanyl and these other synthetic drugs are not just coming in from overseas; they are coming in through our mail system. What we are saying in the STOP Act is, let's close the loophole. Let's say that the mail system in the United States has to say the same thing that other private carriers say, which is, if you want to ship something through our system, that is fine, but you have to tell us what is in it. You have to tell us where it is from and where it is going. Otherwise, they can't effectively stop these packages. It is like finding a needle in a haystack.

I talked earlier about the difficulty of detecting it and how poisonous it is, and sniffing dogs can't be used because of the potential of them overdosing and dying. It is also very difficult for our officers to find these packages without some information. Expert testimony, including that from the Secretary of Homeland Security, General Kelly, from Customs and Border Protection, and from the folks at DEA all reach the same conclusion, which is that this policy change would make it easier for law enforcement to detect suspicious packages of fentanyl, carfentanil, and other synthetic drugs and help keep this poison out of our country.

Support for this legislation is bipartisan, and it is growing. We now have 16 cosponsors in the Senate—8 Democrats and 8 Republicans. Completely bipartisan. In the House, Congressman

PAT TIBERI of Ohio and RICHARD NEAL of Massachusetts—a Republican and a Democrat—have introduced bipartisan companion legislation. They now have 128 cosponsors. Support is building. It is an obvious way to help push back. Is it the silver bullet? No. There is not one silver bullet. We need to do more in terms of prevention, treatment, and recovery, and help our law enforcement more to make sure they have naloxone to be able to save lives.

At least, let's stop some of this poison from coming in, and let's at least increase the cost of the fentanyl because one reason you see this big increase in overdoses from fentanyl and carfentanil and traffickers using more of it is because of the cost. At the very least, by helping our law enforcement, giving them the tools they need, we can stop some of it and increase the cost on the street.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting the STOP Act. We have a hearing on this legislation on Thursday of this week in the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. We have experts coming in—law enforcement officers who care a lot about their colleagues. They talk about what a danger this is to them, what a danger this is to our communities. It is time for us in the U.S. Senate to stand up and take this important step, not the silver bullet but the important step to be able to help save lives and make our communities safer.

Thank you, Madam President.

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, will the Senator from Ohio yield for a question?

Mr. PORTMAN. Absolutely.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. Thank you, Madam President.

I say to the Senator, I appreciate what he is doing. I am a supporter and one of the cosponsors of his bill. This fentanyl problem is just devastating communities all over the country, including in my State of Florida.

What was surprising to me to find out was that fentanyl is so much more addictive and so much more lethal than so many others of these drugs that ultimately lead to a person becoming addicted so badly that they just crave fentanyl.

I appreciate very much what he has spoken about and given leadership to. I just want him to know there are a lot of us who are trying to raise the flags of awareness of this situation before it is too late.

Mr. PORTMAN. I thank my colleague from Florida. He has been a stalwart on this issue. We have never made this a partisan issue, have we. We always kept this a bipartisan issue because this is a danger to our country, our communities—all Americans. The Senator is absolutely right. It is 30 to 50 times more powerful than heroin. A few flakes can kill you, as you see here.

It is absolutely necessary we figure out a way together, as Republicans and

Democrats. With the recovery efforts the Senator supported and the Cures Act he already supported, this is the next logical step to deal with the new threat, which is this synthetic heroin coming to our country.

I thank my colleague from Florida.

I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORAN). The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON. In passing, I would say to the Senator from Ohio, what was so surprising to me was, just a few grains of this deadly drug, just by being touched by someone, is absorbed into the system through the skin, and it can be lethal—just that innocent act of touching a few grains. So, indeed, we have to get our arms around this problem.

HAITI

Mr. President, I want to address the Senate on a different subject. If you will recall the devastating earthquake in this little country of Haiti—the poorest nation in the entire Western Hemisphere—you can imagine what that earthquake did. Just as people are beginning to get their lives back together, here comes a hurricane, and it devastates even more. As a result, over the course of those years, a number of Haitians were admitted into the United States under TPS, temporary protected status. That is a special entry into the United States, usually because of a natural catastrophe that has occurred in another nation in the world, but it is with the understanding that, indeed, as the first word of TPS says, it is “temporary.”

So into the United States—allowing some relief on all of the stresses on the local economy and the government because of that devastating earthquake, and then later the hurricane on top of it—are approximately just less than 60,000 Haitians here legally on TPS. So the Government of the United States is making a decision and has just announced earlier today that it will extend TPS. I might say, that is a bipartisan request from many of us from the Florida delegation—to extend TPS until the nation of Haiti can, in fact, absorb 60,000 people back into its little island economy.

These are people who generally want to go back. Their families are there. These are people who have now earned a substantial savings that they send back as remittances to their families. These are people with skills that Haiti, as it continues to rebuild from a poverty-stricken nation, will want to have back because of their skills.

I might say that when I knew the Department of Homeland Security was considering this—whether to revoke the TPS status or to extend it—I felt quite confident that the Secretary of DHS, General Kelly, the former commander of Southcom, the U.S. Southern Command—that in his 3-year stint as commander of Southcom, he in fact would understand all the nuances because he had lived with that problem. He understood it. He understood not

only TPS for the Haitians, but he also understood the TPS that even years before had been given to a number of Central Americans when they came into the country under temporary protected status, which they likewise had been extended, and that status has not been revoked. I felt quite confident that General Kelly, as the Secretary of DHS, would extend TPS from ordering immediate removal to the Nation of Haiti of 60,000 people. Indeed, General Kelly announced that decision earlier today, and he has granted a 6-month extension.

Now, therein lies the problem. I have just spoken to General Kelly, who is really a tremendous, lifelong marine, very decorated, a true hero. He is someone that has comported with his duties, whatever it has been in his service to America, in the most exemplary manner. What I wanted to discuss with General Kelly was that there is just no way in 6 months that the Nation of Haiti can absorb 60,000 of its people back. It would be like trying to swallow a bite of food that is way too big in order to do it.

So what I urged General Kelly after this announcement was made, which has caused alarm in the Haitian-American community—it certainly caused alarm in the nation of Haiti, the Government of Haiti. Indeed, the Ambassador was asking for an extension of at least 18 months. I don't think it is out of the question that General Kelly will consider that. Therefore, I asked him to please confer with the leadership in the Haitian-American community in South Florida, a community he is well aware of since he lived in Miami for 3 years as the commander of U.S. Southern Command. I think he will follow that suggestion and meet in the not-too-distant future with the leaders.

General Kelly also told me he was planning a trip to Haiti to discuss this directly with the Government of Haiti. That is important because how can they reasonably absorb them back into society, utilize their skills—and over what period of time can that be done? Therefore, I commend General Kelly, the Secretary of DHS, on the way he has approached it. I would urge our Haitian-American communities in America to just be patient. Understand that General Kelly is going to do a comprehensive overview and that in 6 months, come January, suddenly 60,000 people are not going to be kicked out of the country.

The truth is, I am not sure the Government of the United States knows exactly where all the 60,000 are. So that is going to be another question of locating them, once the decision is made, which this Senator has certainly urged at least 18 months before that would start. I have spoken to the Haitian Ambassador. He told me it is a newly formed government in Haiti and is working on a plan to further rebuild and develop the country so its people can make their lives there again. They have asked for the extension of TPS up

to 18 months while they continue to rebuild. I think that by Secretary Kelly indicating he is going to Haiti very soon, that he has indicated he is going to reconsider the decision that was made about 6 months, suddenly revoking all of their TPS status. As Haiti continues to rebuild, repatriating 60,000 Haitians here in the United States needs to be pursued according to a plan that will not destabilize the new government's efforts.

Remember, this is a government that had a temporary government because there was a question about chicanery in the election. There was actually a temporary President that governed the country, and then new elections were held with an overwhelming winner who is now the President of Haiti. So in this newly formed government, you don't want to destabilize their efforts, which would divert precious resources to just reintegrating the people who would be sent back from the United States. It could cause a severe overburden on the government. Therefore, what this Senator is asking for—what I think, at the end of the day, will probably be 18 months, given that time, and then start an orderly transition of those TPS Haitians back to their own country.

Thus, the United States can continue to be focused on helping Haiti recover from all of these disasters they have suffered. Therefore, I feel quite confident Secretary Kelly will do that.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mrs. ERNST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that if the Branstad nomination is confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. ERNST. Mr. President, I rise today to encourage my colleagues to support Iowa Governor Terry Branstad's nomination to be U.S. Ambassador to the People's Republic of China. The position of U.S. Ambassador to China is one of the most important ambassadorial positions in the world. I am confident that my friend and Governor, Terry Branstad, is the right person for the job.

Having worked alongside the Governor for many years, I know he will exemplify the same leadership, thoughtfulness, and dedication in his role as Ambassador to China on behalf of the United States as he did for the people of Iowa. Importantly, Governor Branstad also knows China and its leaders well. He first met President Xi Jinping while he was visiting Iowa on an agricultural research trip in 1985.

They have kept in touch over the years, and Governor Branstad has visited China a number of times on behalf of the State of Iowa. Iowa's extensive trade relationship with China has given

Governor Branstad a front-seat view of the complexities of our country's broader trade and economic relationship with China and will provide him with the foundation to effectively advocate for U.S. interests, as evidenced by his successful confirmation before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which approved his nomination by voice vote.

Governor Branstad will not only work tirelessly to foster our trade and economic interests with China, but he is also prepared to tackle the many other complex, bilateral issues we have with China, from North Korea to the South China Sea to human rights. It has been an honor to serve the people of Iowa alongside Governor Branstad, the longest serving Governor in U.S. history, and I am thrilled to continue to work with him in his new role serving the American people.

I thank Governor Branstad for his service to Iowa, and I wish him and his family the best as they prepare to depart for Beijing.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I join the Senator from Iowa in supporting Governor Branstad as our next Ambassador to China. I have the opportunity of being the ranking Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I knew of Governor Branstad's reputation as the Governor of Iowa—that he was well thought of and that his leadership was recognized not only by the people of his State but in our Nation.

So I was, before the nomination was made, impressed by his dedication to public service. I then had a chance to meet with him in my office. I must tell you that I was extremely impressed about how he was prepared to move on to be the Ambassador to China and how he spoke in favor of our strong ideals.

We then had a confirmation hearing in our committee, and that very much confirmed his knowledge of the challenges that he has, his dedication to public service, and that he would be a strong advocate for American values. So I support his nomination and I urge my colleagues to confirm Governor Branstad. As Senator ERNST pointed out, our mission in China is a particularly important international responsibility.

We know that China plays a significant role—maybe even a dominating role—in regard to North Korea and in trying to get North Korea to give up its nuclear arsenal. We also know that China has a very checkered record on protecting the human rights of its own citizens. We have major trade issues between the United States and China, in which our Ambassador needs to be engaged to protect American commercial interests.

We have the continuing saga between Taiwan and China and living up to our commitments to protect the integrity of Taiwan. Then, we have a very dangerous situation in the South China

Sea, where China has done many provocative activities that will require the diplomacy of our Ambassador in Beijing in order to encourage the use of the rule of law in direct negotiations between the parties and not claiming territory by provocative actions.

So, for all of those issues, we need an experienced Ambassador in China to represent our interests. What really impressed me about Governor Branstad is that I do believe he has a passion for American values.

I particularly appreciated his willingness—and would even say he was anxious—to represent American and global interests for China's improving their human rights record and dealing with the right of religious minorities, dealing with the right of dissent, and dealing with the right of free expression and the press. He very much spoke about the need for the rule of law. So while we welcome the emergence of a prosperous China, we want one that follows international institutional laws and norms. That is going to be the challenge for our next Ambassador.

Let me comment on what I believe the Trump administration is doing that is going to make our next Ambassador's responsibilities even more challenging than perhaps they should be; that is, that we have seen already that in the discussions between President Xi and President Trump with respect to North Korea, it seems like the Trump administration is prepared to give up some of our American values in order to make progress with regard to North Korea, such as our interests in our American workers, our interests in the South China Sea, in maritime security, our relationship with Taiwan, and human rights, et cetera.

That would be a bad deal. Yes, we want North Korea to be under control and to give up its nuclear weapons. Yes, we want China to exercise a much stronger role in convincing North Korea that it is in their interests to give up their nuclear weapon program. We want to do that. There are ways we can. It is in China's interests that North Korea give up its nuclear weapon ambition. They want a nonnuclear Korean Peninsula. We should not trade our values in order for that to be able to occur.

The second matter, which I have talked about on the floor before, that is going to make it more difficult for our next Ambassador is the President's continued unwillingness to comply with the emoluments clause of the Constitution.

As I have said on the floor before, every President before President Trump either divested of their conflicted ownership of assets or they set up a blind trust, but Mr. Trump did not. Shortly after his election, the Trump organization received trademarks through the Chinese Government that they had been unsuccessful in obtaining for years, in which they have spent literally hundreds of thousands of dollars if not more in legal fees.

All of a sudden, 1 week after the President is elected, the Chinese Government grants these trademarks. It is hard to believe that the fact that they were dealing with the President of the United States did not weigh into decisions made by the Chinese Government.

But it does not end there. We also know that a member of his family was in China to sell the EB-5 visas. That, again, presented a direct conflict. We actually know that his daughter received three new trademarks in an incredibly speedy turnaround—the same night that the daughter had dinner with President Xi.

These things don't look good. The emoluments clause is where a foreign government tries to influence our President through doing favors. It is going to be very difficult for the American people—in fact, very difficult for the international community—to believe that it was not, in part, due to the position that Mr. Trump holds that these actions took place.

That violates our Constitution. That is wrong.

The bottom line is that our next Ambassador is going to have to deal with those issues. We have a hard enough assignment in dealing with North Korea, trade, the South China Sea, Taiwan, and human rights to throw in these additional hurdles. So I urge my colleagues to support Mr. Branstad's nomination. I believe that he is well-qualified to represent this country. I hope the Trump administration will give him a stronger hand to play.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

MR. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MR. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I think I will be done speaking before the time for the vote arrives, but I ask unanimous consent for permission to finish my remarks.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MR. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I am pleased that the Senate is finally considering the nomination of Governor Branstad of Iowa to be Ambassador to China. Before I speak about this very well-qualified nominee, I would like to express my great disappointment and great frustration with the seemingly endless obstruction on the part of the minority.

This nominee received unanimous support in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee more than a week ago. Yet the majority leader was required to file cloture on the nominee because there could not be consent given to move forward with it. We could have approved this nomination with just a few minutes of debate time. Yet the minority required that we have

the cloture vote and the 30 hours afterwards, not because they wanted to debate the merits of the nominee but simply to delay the business of the Senate. It is unfortunate that their delay has kept an eminently qualified individual from getting into the job to promote America's interest in China sooner than it now will be.

I am honored to have the opportunity today to speak to my colleagues about my good friend, Governor Terry Branstad.

Governor Branstad is the longest-serving Governor in U.S. history. Let me make that clear. Out of 50 States for 230 years, no person in the United States has served their State as Governor of that State longer than Terry Branstad has now. He is a lifelong Iowan who has devoted his life to public service.

After more than 22 years as my home State's chief executive, I am proud to support Governor Branstad's nomination to serve our country as the next U.S. Ambassador to the People's Republic of China.

The fact is, Governor Branstad has been an ambassador for Iowa to the Nation and even to the world for his entire career. He has been a champion for Iowa and on behalf of Iowans around the globe. As Governor, he has been vigorous in promoting our State's economy and opening markets for our farm commodities, financial services, and manufacturing to the world marketplace.

His nomination should come as no surprise to the people of Iowa. We have long known and benefited from the relationship Governor Branstad has had with the people of China. A sister state relationship in 1983 has grown into a successful trade partnership that has benefited Iowa farmers and businesses.

Perhaps most notably, Governor Branstad enjoys a 30-year friendship with President Xi. Their first meeting took place in 1985 in Iowa when, then a Provincial official, Xi led an agricultural delegation to Iowa. President Xi visited Iowa again in 2012, when Governor Branstad was back at the helm in his fifth term after a 12-year respite from being Governor. Their relationship reflects genuine goodwill and, more importantly, mutual respect.

Governor Branstad has never stopped working to expand Iowa's trade, investment, and economic partnerships on the world stage, including many trips to China. He will bring midwestern humility and level-headed leadership to the job. He is a workhorse who is unafraid to get into the trenches to get the job done. I have no doubt that he will stand strong for American values, such as freedom of the press and religious liberty, and that he will work to strengthen peace, stability, and prosperity between our two nations.

Once he is confirmed, I am confident that Governor Branstad will bring to bear his tireless commitment to solve problems and always move the ball forward. Although his heart will always

be in Iowa, I know Governor Branstad will throw himself into this job wholeheartedly.

Governor Branstad is uniquely qualified to help strengthen the trade, economic, cultural, and geopolitical relationships between our two countries. I am pleased that he has now been called to serve our entire Nation, not just the State of Iowa, as Ambassador to China. I have every confidence that he will represent the United States well and will excel, just as he has throughout his entire public career.

Without reservation, then, I support this nomination. I also urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this nomination.

Thank you very much.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, all postcloture time has expired.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Branstad nomination?

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON), the Senator from Utah (Mr. LEE), and the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Tennessee (Mr. ALEXANDER) would have voted "yea", the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON) would have voted "yea", and the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) would have voted "yea."

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LANKFORD). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 82, nays 13, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 133 Ex.]

YEAS—82

Barrasso	Enzi	Manchin
Bennet	Ernst	McCain
Blunt	Feinstein	McCaskill
Boozman	Fischer	McConnell
Burr	Flake	Menendez
Cantwell	Franken	Merkley
Capito	Gardner	Moran
Cardin	Graham	Murphy
Carper	Grassley	Murray
Casey	Hassan	Nelson
Cassidy	Hatch	Paul
Cochran	Heinrich	Perdue
Collins	Heitkamp	Portman
Coons	Heller	Reed
Corker	Hoeven	Risch
Cornyn	Inhofe	Roberts
Cortez Masto	Johnson	Rounds
Cotton	Kaine	Rubio
Crapo	Kennedy	Sasse
Cruz	King	Schatz
Daines	Klobuchar	Scott
Donnelly	Lankford	Shaheen
Durbin	Leahy	Shelby

Strange	Toomey	Wicker
Sullivan	Udall	Wyden
Tester	Van Hollen	Young
Thune	Warner	
Tillis	Whitehouse	

NAYS—13

Baldwin	Gillibrand	Schumer
Blumenthal	Hirono	Stabenow
Booker	Markey	Warren
Brown	Peters	
Duckworth	Sanders	

NOT VOTING—5

Alexander	Isakson	Murkowski
Harris	Lee	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The majority leader.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to proceed to executive session to consider Calendar No. 59, Amul Thapar to be United States circuit judge for the Sixth Circuit.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Amul R. Thapar, of Kentucky, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Sixth Circuit.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I send a cloture motion to the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Amul R. Thapar, of Kentucky, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Sixth Circuit.

Mitch McConnell, Orrin G. Hatch, Roger F. Wicker, Jeff Flake, John Cornyn, Chuck Grassley, John Hoeven, James E. Risch, Mike Rounds, Deb Fischer, Mike Crapo, Jerry Moran, Pat Roberts, Lindsey Graham, John Kennedy, Steve Daines, David Perdue.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call with respect to the cloture motion be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO REVEREND DENNIS H. HOLTSCHNEIDER

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I would like to take a few moments to thank Reverend Dennis H. Holschneider for all he has done to bring educational excellence to our State.

After nearly 13 years as president of DePaul University, the largest Catholic university in the country, Father Holschneider will be retiring later this summer. He originally planned on stepping down in 2019 at the end of his contract, but always putting DePaul first, he decided that wouldn't fit with the university's planning cycle. After leading the university through two successful strategic plans, he said, "It's best for DePaul if I step aside in the summer of 2017 so that a new leader can assist the institution to name and ambitiously pursue its next set of strategic objectives." What a class act. It is no surprise, for more than a decade, Reverend Holschneider has put DePaul University first.

During Father Holschneider's tenure, U.S. News and World Report recognized DePaul University as among the country's "Most Innovative Universities." While many colleges and universities shift their missions over the years, Reverend Holschneider has always remained committed to DePaul University's founding principles—a devotion to first generation students. He has raised about \$460 million in philanthropic support for this noble cause, including \$333 million for the "Many Dreams, One Mission" campaign to ensure access to high quality education for future generations of DePaul students.

Born in Detroit, Father Holschneider graduated from Niagara University with a bachelor's degree in mathematics, studied for the priesthood at Mary Immaculate Seminary, and also received a doctorate in higher education administration from Harvard University. Prior to joining DePaul University, Father Holschneider served as executive vice president and chief operating officer of his alma mater, Niagara University. He also was the director and rector of Vincentian College Seminary and has been a faculty member in the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Since 2014, Father Holschneider has chaired the board of Ascension, the Nation's largest Catholic and nonprofit health system, but will be stepping down to become executive vice president and chief operating officer later this summer.